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The Theory of Conscience: an Historical Sketch.

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by

John Robert Van Pelt.

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The Theory of Conscience: an Historical Sketch.

— II —

Introduction.

There are few words, probably, which for most men are of so much weight as the word 'conscience'; and yet it is certain that few words in common use represent for most minds so indefinite a notion as this. But the vagueness is chiefly on the speculative side. In practical use the word is pretty certain to be understood well enough. It is a word that strikes home. At first thought nothing seems simpler than the notion of conscience, and certainly the word is among the commonest. And yet the fact that in the last twenty or thirty years so much has been written – a number of monographs being included – to elucidate the theory of conscience, is a sure indication that the subject is not without special difficulties.

"There is a world of phenomena, thoughts and facts, which we comprehend in the one word conscience" (Luthardt,

Zur Ethik, p. 1). But we feel sure of a certain unity in all these various phenomena. In what, then, does it consist? What is the common element in all these phenomena? In other words, what is conscience? What is the compass, and what is the content, of the term? But an adequate answer to these inquiries does not appear to be easy. And the term conscience has been used in such a variety of senses, or with so many shades of meaning, that some (e.g. Rothe, Theol. Ethik, Sect. 177, Anmerkung 3) have wished to see it banished from scientific use. But the fault does not lie in the word, as being ill-suited to accurate use. What is needed here, as everywhere, is sharp definition and consistent use of the term. No new term invented to take its place would be exempt from misunderstandings and misuse. Every objection which has been directed against the use of 'conscience' in scien-

tific discussion would be equally pertinent in case of multitudes of other terms common to scientific and every-day use. Terms in current use often have a depth of meaning and a weight which no artificial term possesses. It is better, then, to hold to the terms in current use, if they can be kept reasonably clear of misunderstandings, than to invent a term which, while certainly liable to similar misunderstandings, will probably have far less weight and power of illumination.

But the name of that inner experience which we call conscience is not one of the unpremeditated creations of speech (Kähler, Das Gewissen, p. 6). We do not have to compare roots to reach the origin of the word 'conscience'. In Greek and Latin we find the words answering to our word conscience pretty clearly defined in use, and we can follow the history of the words, both in respect to their formation and use, and that with toler-

able accuracy. All modern European languages have simply inherited what was thus prepared for them, though not always adopting a word of kindred form, yet always adhering to the root-idea of συνείδησις and conscientia. Some of these languages, however, exhibit further developments in the use of the terms, especially in that, as in English and German, the two meanings included in συνείδησις and conscientia (consciousness and conscience) have been assigned respectively to two distinct, but related, forms. The term, then, is the result of considerable discriminating reflection; and its practical value is too manifest to require a defense. But, while the word is the product of considerable reflection, it is not an artificial expression. It doubtless arose among reflecting common people, at first without great depth of meaning; but it was happily suited

to become wedded to a growing notion as its most adequate expression. There was an earlier and less profound meaning of the word, and it gradually rose (but without really losing the first) to take on the more strictly ethical meaning. And the remarkable agreement of civilized peoples is certainly enough to secure to it certain rights, at least until something better is proposed in its place. "However uncertain the limits of its real meaning may be in common speech, we should not be misled thereby as to its true value; it certainly corresponds to a value, which it is the business of inquiring thought to make clear" (Köhler, Das Gewissen, p. 7). Were it not so, we should be setting before us the very unsatisfactory task of following out an unfortunate course of thought, only to find the notion we supposed to be expressed by the word to be nothing more than an <u>ignis fatuus</u>.

To return to the first inquiry "What is conscience?" it is only necessary to give here a general definition. A thoroughly adequate definition is rather one of the chief <u>ends</u> of investigation and thought concerning the theory of conscience. We may call it for the present "the faculty which places man in conscious relation to moral law" (Robt. Ottley, in "Lux Mundi", p. 396, "Christian Ethics", - Am. ed.). We know the power in man — no matter how he got the power — to distinguish "between meaning right and meaning wrong" (Jos. Cook, "Conscience", p. 9). The word conscience bears witness to a distinction between what we conceive to be "right" and "wrong" which has at least subjective validity, and certainly appears to have objective validity. That is to say, conscience implies a conscious relation to a moral <u>law</u>, which is above us. It presupposes obligation, and indicates that we are able to recognize obligation. At present nothing need be said as

to the origin of the faculty, or the more particular nature of it. All philosophers agree that men do make moral distinctions. Let us, then, understand by 'conscience' the faculty (native or acquired) by which they do it. It is not even necessary at this point to attempt to remove the objection of the materialist, that there is, properly speaking, no such thing as conscience. Even the materialist is aware of the set of psychological phenomena, which men have become accustomed to fasten together by the word conscience. He is only denying that the faculty is an original and essential one, conscience appearing to him as a product of education, by the habitual association of impressions. But it is not necessary to assume in advance the original and essential character of conscience as a faculty. Let that be determined by thorough inquiry. In the meantime no confusion and no begging of the question will arise from

allowing the term conscience to stand for the faculty by which men make moral distinctions. Neither the unquestioned validity of the distinctions, or of any part of them, nor the originality and essentiality of the faculty need be assumed. These are true objects of inquiry.

Still, as opposed to materialism, we are disposed to reply, in the words of Prof. Rud. Hofmann (Die Lehre von dem Gewissen, p. 8), "Conscience is as old as mankind itself. Conscience is also the common possession of all men. Both propositions are indubitable." And yet both propositions, as a matter of fact, have been doubted. Can they, then, be certainly proved to be true against all doubts? Who will undertake to show, by complete induction, that all men have, or have had, conscience? Or who, by the path of psychological analysis, can prove that conscience is so absolutely essential to human nature that no man can exist without it? Still,

just such inquiries are important, and cannot but be fruitful, if carried on in a proper way. No complete historical induction is possible, of course, and no psychological analysis can completely settle the question of the universality and essentiality of conscience. And yet, by means of psychological introspection and historico-anthropological study much insight may be gained. But it must be conceded that such inquiries are liable to be vitiated by the most decided prejudgments. Besides, we are not to conceal from our eyes the inherent difficulties in such inquiries. We cannot, by a study of our own experience, tell certainly whether our conscience is a native faculty, or whether we acquired it. And, if we study history and anthropology, we are confronted by our inability to find any certain traces of the notion of right and wrong in certain men, and

we are struck by the fact that the conception of conscience as a faculty only gradually came to receive clear expression.

But this last fact of the gradual development of the conception of conscience is at least a hint that some light is to be expected along the path of inquiry concerning the development of the names and of the conception of that experience which we call conscience. This is, indeed, the true historical inquiry in the case. Instead of inquiring historically whether all men have had conscience, — an impossible undertaking — we have here something given, which we may definitely search into. It is not the history of conscience itself that is proposed, but rather an historical inquiry concerning the notion and the doctrine of conscience. From such a study some light, surely, is to be expected. And this investigation is really indispensable as a basis of a complete understanding of the theory of conscience, although

it is ordinarily sufficient that general treatises should simply make use of the final results of such inquiry. — So far as the present essay is concerned, only a brief outline can be attempted. The plan of this sketch is as follows:

I. The origin and development of the <u>names</u> for conscience, and the development of the <u>notion</u>.

II. The main theories of the <u>nature</u> of conscience.

In the second division the purpose is simply to set forth the leading theories, and add brief critical discussions. A finished constructive treatise cannot be attempted within the limits of this paper.

I. The origin and development of the <u>names</u> for conscience, and the development of the <u>notion</u>.

Our word 'conscience' comes to us, of course, from the Latin <u>conscientia</u>; but in classical Latin the word was never used in a religious or properly ethical

sense. Conscientia meant consciousness, but of course it could be applied to ethical matters as well as to any others. The use of conscientia in the special sense of conscience originated under Christian influence. Conscientia was the Latin equivalent of συνείδησις, a word which was common enough in classical Greek, but used first in a religious sense in the New Testament. But even in the N.T. it does not stand for 'conscience' only, but for 'consciousness' also. In classical Greek συνείδησις always meant properly consciousness, even when applied to moral cases. Inasmuch as the Greek word had in its history a special ethical sense stamped upon it, and so of the Latin word also, it will be well to begin our study of the term in its Greek form συνείδησις (and τὸ συνειδός).

The word συνείδησις is manifestly derived from σύνοιδα (συνειδον). The aorist συνειδον does not seem to occur quite so frequently as the perfect tense-form σύνοιδα, and the use of the two differs somewhat. The former usually means 'to see with another,' 'to see with

one's self, in one's mind', i.e., 'to understand, perceive, comprehend' (See Thayer's N. T. Lexicon, s.v.). The pf. σύνοιδα means to know with another, be privy to' (see Acts v, 2. A.V.), Ger. mitwissen. But the word is not applied to all knowledge-in-common, but specially to something that concerns the other party, or both the second person and the subject. In Sophocles' Antigone 264 sq. it is used of witnesses, who, in consequence, share in the guilt of a misdeed. (German "Mitschuldige"). Then comes the use of συνειδέναι ἑαυτῷ = to be one's own witness, to be conscious with one's self. This use is not infrequent in classical Greek. Examples are given in the lexicons from Xenophon, Plato, etc. Plato in the Phaedrus uses the words ξυνειδὼς ἐμαυτῷ ἀμαθίαν = "being conscious of my ignorance". In the Republic (I, 331, A) τῷ μηδὲν ἑαυτῷ ἄδικον ξυνειδότι ἡδεῖα ἐλπὶς ἀεὶ παρεστι κ.τ.λ. = "there is always present sweet hope to him who is conscious with himself of no injustice done". (See Cremer's Wörterbuch, s.v. σύνοιδα, where these and other citations may be found

including most of these that follow in this paper.) The above use instantly suggests Paul's words (1 Cor. IV, 4), οὐδὲν γὰρ ἐμαυτῷ σύνοιδα = "I know nothing against myself." But Paul's use of the word is notably different, in that he has nothing like κακόν, πονηρόν, or ἄδικον to qualify the verb, as in the passage from Plato. The omission is a clear indication of the tendency to use the word specially for ethical judgments — a natural result of the influence of Christian ideas.

The participle (with the article) was sometimes used for witness, or sharer of guilt, or accomplice — (ὁ συνειδώς). Then there was an interesting use of the neuter participle τὸ συνειδός. Demosthenes in De Corona 110 [263, 18] appeals, in the interest of his cause, to what the hearers are conscious of: ὁμοίως παρ' ὑμῶν ἑκάστῳ τὸ συνειδὸς ὑπάρχειν μοι. A use of τὸ συνειδός without a qualifying word, and yet in a good sense, is found in Pausanias 7, 10, 10: ὑπὸ συνειδότος ἐπαρρησιάζετο ἀγαθοῦ.

Here it is manifestly the favorable testimony of his own consciousness that is intended. But the opposite use - where an unfavorable testimony of one's own consciousness is meant - is also to be found in classical Greek. But, as Cremer says (Wörterbuch, s.v. σύνοιδα), "it does not yet contain the idea of an abiding consciousness of such a sort that in it the subject bears testimony to himself, but it is a consciousness that arises on the occasion of the particular points of conduct, and is qualified by them, and is not confined to that which preëminently lies in the domain of the conscience". Philo uses the word συνειδός substantively quite frequently for consciousness of guilt, or, more accurately, for the inner witness (against one's self). For example (De vict. 237, 42), he uses the phrase ὑπὸ τοῦ συνειδότος ἐλεγχόμενος = "condemned by the (inner) witness (against himself). The very same phrase occurs occasionally elsewhere in Philo's writings. And, as it

pointed out by Cremer, and by Köhler (Das Gewissen, p. 34 fol.) Philo's use of the word is to denote an abiding consciousness — ἑκάστῃ ψυχῇ συνοικῶν καὶ συμπέφυκος ἔλεγχος ----- κατήγορος ὁμοῦ καὶ δικαστὴς ὤν. But Philo, though considerably Hellenized, had many Jewish ideas, and it is clear that he derives this from the Old Testament. Although the O. T. has no word corresponding strictly to συνείδησις — the word occurs, however, in the Septuagint translation — the idea, nevertheless, of an abiding consciousness of guilt is certainly a familiar one to it.

From συνειδέναι (rather than συνιδεῖν) is derived συνείδησις. And the meaning that it bears in usage is not to be referred to συνειδέναι τινί ('to know with another'), but to συνειδέναι ἑαυτῷ ('to know with one's self, to be one's own witness'). It is "one's own consciousness appearing as witness" (Cremer). The word

συνείδησις is found not infrequently in classical Greek. It has always properly the more general sense of self-consciousness, or consciousness of something that concerns one's self. There are passages where the word is used in the most direct application to one's own conduct, where the connection shows plainly that a moral consciousness was conceived. These show the beginnings of the conception of conscience as an abiding witness. Still, in classical Greek συνείδησις does not seem ever to be used in any narrower sense than 'consciousness', even when applied to ethical matters. But there are cases where such application is very clear; e.g. ὀρθὴ, ἀγαθὴ συνείδησις = μηδὲν ἑαυτῷ ἄτοπον, ἀδίκημα συνειδέναι: "an upright, good conscience = to be conscious with one's self of no wickedness or injustice" (Stobaeus, Florilegium). In the LXX Apocrypha συνείδησις is used in a sense corresponding closely to "conscience" (Wisdom 17:10) - πονηρία

— συνεχομένη τῇ συνειδήσει. Still, even here, "consciousness" would answer. In the Septuagint rendering of Eccl. 10:20 the Hebrew מַדָּע, 'thought,' is translated by συνείδησις — "Curse not the king, no, not even in thy (inner) consciousness (or thought)." The Septuagint, though not classical Greek, is not to be regarded as varying largely from it. And if it uses συνείδησις in a sense more resembling the N. T. usage than classical Greek shows, that is to be explained from the influence of O. T. ideas. Yet the O. T. has no word that corresponds to συνείδησις with any degree of strictness. The elements of the notion, however, are there, and συνείδησις was a Greek attempt to render an O. T. idea by a well-known word. In doing this, however, the force of the word was altered slightly.

The use of συνείδησις in the sense of 'conscience' (proper) is probably first found in the New Testament. But it is not to be supposed that even here

it uniformly bears this sense. For instance, in Heb. x, 2, the "conscience of sins" is clearly only consciousness (though an abiding consciousness) of sins. There are, however, a number of passages where the more specific meaning of 'conscience' is sufficiently certain — quite unmistakable, indeed.

The word is not used by our Lord nor by any of the writers of the New Testament except Paul, Luke, the unknown author of Hebrews, and Peter. The first three are a Pauline group. Our Lord did not use the term 'conscience', indeed, but he did appeal to it in fact when, especially in the Sermon on the Mount, he spoke of "the light that is in thee" (Matt. 6: 23). Elsewhere he uses the very inclusive word "heart" as signifying the moral faculty. This word, also, is the favorite of John: "if thy heart condemn thee;" (and often).

Paul takes up the word which, in classical Greek, meant generally 'con-

sciousness; and, being doubtless profoundly sensible of an abiding consciousness of moral obligation, applies the word specially to this experience. And he assumes that this experience is found in mankind universally. He appeals to the conscience, as in 2 Cor. IV, 2 ("by the manifestation of the truth commending ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God"); in Rom. II, 15 ("their [the Gentiles'] conscience bearing witness therewith"); and in Rom. XIII, 5, 6 (of being in subjection "for conscience' sake"). The phrase διὰ τὴν συνείδησιν – "for conscience' sake" – seems to mean mean here 'because conscience – our own conscience – requires it'; i.e., because we are conscious that the thing is a moral, – divine – requirement. But in 1 Cor. X, 28 the phrase evidently means 'for the sake of avoiding occasion of offense in the conscience of others. (See Thayer's N. T. Lex., s.v.) The passages 2 Cor. IV, 2, and Rom. II, 15 (just referred to) use 'conscience' as ascribed to

all men (indiscriminately). Elsewhere Paul speaks only of the conscience of the Christian, although without making a real distinction between the conscience of the Gentile (or of the pre-Christian Jew) and the conscience of the Christian, only in so far as the enlightenment of the Christian makes a difference. It is evident that, where there is no "law" (Rom. II, 15), the teaching of Paul is that conscience confirms the obligation to a law written on the heart. And this is a faculty that belongs to humanity as such. But where there is knowledge of God the conscience is to be determined accordingly. Only in this sense does Paul seem to distinguish between the Gentile (or pre-Christian) conscience and the Christian conscience.

So Paul's use of conscience implies, first, an obligation to divine law, known as law, even though the knowledge of the source of the law may be unknown. A second element in

the Pauline use of the word is the notion of a self-witnessing judgment concerning one's relation to moral (specially divine) law. He speaks of having lived in "all good conscience" (Acts XXIII, 1), and elsewhere of "good conscience". And he clearly appeals to the testimony of conscience to conduct (2 Cor. IV, 2; V, 11, and elsewhere). In 2 Tim. I, 3 he speaks of serving God "in a pure conscience", — an acquitting self-judgment being clearly intended. Outside of the strictly Pauline use of 'conscience' there is nothing specially different from what we find in his epistles. In Hebrews IX, 9, however, the term conscience seems to stand for "the state of mind of those under the old covenant" (Köhler, Art. "Gewissen" in Herzog-Plitt's Encycl.). In Hebrews also occurs the interesting passage (X, 2) concerning "conscience of sins", where consciousness would probably be a better translation. It should be remembered, of course, that the notion of 'consciousness' is really fun-

damental in συνείδησις and conscientia. In 1 Peter III, 21 the good conscience is connected with baptism. The passage is a very difficult one, but it probably has no treasure of meaning for the word conscience which is not derivable from clearer passages.

Enough has been said to show that the ethical use of συνείδησις in the N.T. is simply a specializing of the general force of the word as signifying 'consciousness.' The more special doctrines connected with the N.T. use of the word will be left to the second division of the essay. It remains here for us to follow out briefly the gradual fixing of the terms for conscience in the Latin and modern languages.

It is argued by Kähler (Das Gewissen, p. 53 fol.) that there is evidence that the Romans were in no large measure dependent on the Greeks for the (partially specialized) ethical use of

conscientia, which corresponds to συνείδησις. Cicero had developed the use of conscientia as far as τὸ συνειδός was afterwards developed by Philo. The word conscientia was doubtless a word in common use, although not introduced into philosophy (except in a measure by Cicero) until Seneca did so.

It will be unnecessary to follow out the argument to show the originality of the Romans in their use of conscientia for an abiding self-testimony concerning one's moral relation. A few notices of Latin uses of the term will suffice to mark the point which development reached in Latin usage in the period before Christianity took possession of the literature of the Roman empire.

Among classical Latin writers conscientia was frequent enough, and often had a strong ethical quality. Its most important occurrences - for our inquiry - are to be found in

two authors, Cicero and Seneca. Of course it must be understood that no Pagan writers have ever sharply distinguished between the general and the special (ethical) use of <u>conscientia</u>. And the "general" use (= consciousness) appears always in classical Latin to have been much the more frequent of the two uses. A genitive usually determined the particular force of the word; e.g., conscientia culpae (Livy), flagitii (Tacitus), peccatorum (Cicero). But various passages might be cited from Cicero to show that with him "the conscience appears as a law-giving faculty" (Köhler, Das Gewissen, p. 62). Rudolf Hofmann thinks he finds with Cicero the idea developed that conscience is "the consciousness of what in every case is duty." But that seems to be a claim that is not established. He does indeed say (Fam. 3.17) <u>fretus conscientia officii mei</u>, and elsewhere speaks of the <u>grave conscientiae pondus</u>; but these

show no more than that consciousness may be appealed to in the cases in hand, or in like cases generally, but not as an infallible guide to indicate one's duty beforehand. Much the same is to be said of Seneca. And, in general concerning the classical use of conscientia as applied to matters of morals, it is to be said it does not exhibit any teaching of an enlightening conscience that precedes an action assuring one of one's duty. It is a consciousness of rectitude of will or conduct; but the certainty of what duty was rested on other grounds. A man was supposed to know, somehow, what was right; and, when he did what was right, he could appeal to his consciousness of rectitude in the matter.

It was the influence of Christian thought which gave to conscientia in ecclesiastical Latin a more ethical sense in general than it had had previously. But in

the Latin language there was never invented a second word by which a distinction could be drawn between the general and special uses of the word. The English language makes the distinction clear, by means of the words 'consciousness' and 'conscience'; and the German by 'Bewusstsein' and 'Gewissen'. But we should keep in mind that our distinction is more a convenience than a necessity. Conscience is consciousness, only in a particular domain.

II. Having traced, sufficiently for the present purpose, the history of συνείδησις, conscientia, conscience, until they received their special ethical import, we may now pass on to consider historically the main stages or <u>momenta</u> in the views of the <u>nature</u> of conscience. But even here we must turn first to those notions and theories which really had the moral faculty as object, even though the term 'conscience' was yet unknown, and the

the concept itself was, perhaps, vague. Here, if anywhere, a "Vorgeschichte" is necessary to the understanding of the subject. It will be the effort, then, to show in brief statement, the theories of antiquity concerning what we call conscience, along with the more specific teachings of the New Testament, and the theories of subsequent times.

The Old Testament, while full of religious and moral teaching, contains little that could in any way be called ethical philosophy. If, however, one asks for indications of the views of the writers concerning those thoughts and experiences which we fasten together by the word conscience, the answer is not difficult. In that early account of the temptation and fall of the first parents — be the story bald fact or poetically handled — are to be found a clear apprehension of the phenomena of conscience. In all parts of

the O. T. the evidences of a keen sense of moral obligation are exceedingly clear. No doubt the ideas of the Hebrews concerning moral questions were often crude and even erroneous. But there was no doubt about the fact that man stands in the most unmistakable relation to moral law. With the Hebrews, however, moral obligation was more immediately religious obligation than with any other people. If anything was right, it was the will of God, and was right because it was God's will. And if anything that seemed in itself not clearly right could be made to appear to be God's will, the moral obligation was established. The Hebrews do not appear to have developed any moral philosophy in the period of sacred history. It was religion which occupied the minds of the thinkers. But religion included morality.

Since God was, according to the

Hebrew view, the immediate source of all moral obligation, no doctrine of conscience as a natural faculty could receive a prominent place in religious thought. Still, the use of the word "heart" among the Hebrews must have corresponded in many instances closely to our use of "conscience". Job is made to say (27: 6) "My righteousness I hold fast, and will not let it go: my heart shall not reproach me as long as I live". Jeremiah (XXXI, 33) speaks of God's writing his law on men's hearts. As to the fact of conscience testimony is abundant enough throughout the Old Testament. The story of Joseph's brethren, of Saul, of David (see especially the penitential Psalms), of the appeals of the Prophets, are examples.

The O. T. doctrine of conscience is, in fine, a doctrine of a consciousness of offense to the law of God. It is preeminently a re-

ligious view. But farther than this general view the writers of the O. T. do not seem to have gone. There was ample recognition of a faculty of "discerning good from evil"; but no philosophy concerning that faculty. There was a belief that men were conscious of sin, and that the sinner was self-condemned. Still, there does not appear any evidence of a theory of a faculty which, apart from a revealed law of God, is to be looked to for a decision in questions of casuistry. It is, however, to be said, that the germs of the Christian doctrine of conscience are to be found in the Old Testament.

As we turn to heathen antiquity, we may without loss pass by the Greek philosophers who preceded Socrates; for he was properly "the father of moral philosophy." Before him were two periods of morals (according

to Cocker, "Christianity and Greek Philosophy" p. 496 fol.): (1) the age of popular and unconscious morality; (2) the transitional, skeptical, or sophistical age; and (3) the Socratic period, philosophic or conscious age of morality.

It has been said that "before Socrates there was no morality in Greece, only propriety of conduct" (quoted by Cocker, p. 500). According to Aristotle Socrates' chief class of subjects for inquiry was ethical questions. "He never ceased asking," says Xenophon, "What is piety? what is impiety? what is noble? what is base? what is just? what is unjust? what is temperance? what is madness?"

Socrates held that virtue (morality) can be taught. It was the "main business of education to draw out into the light of consciousness the principles of right and justice which are enfolded within the conscience of man — to deliver the mind of the secret truth which was striving toward

the light of day" (Cocker, p. 502). He was fond of laying stress on the belief that there is in man a divine something (τὸ δαιμόνιον, δαιμόνιόν τι). It might be ethical — a warning voice, or it might be more than we ordinarily understand by that word. In any case it meant that there is light and reason for all men, and Socrates was thus the "great prophet of the human conscience". So one may say that Socrates held in a modified sense the truth that lay at the bottom of the saying of Protagoras, "Man is the measure of all things." Only it is the good man, the morally developed man, and not the individual man as such, as he is by nature. But the question is, How is this moral training to be brought about? Socrates, as has been said, believed that virtue can be taught, and his method was to cause men

to look and examine and determine what is just and noble and right. Ignorance was the source of evil, and in wisdom resides all virtue. It is because men do not know, that they sin.

But Socrates held to no utilitarian scheme of ethics. To him the worst and most shameful thing was to act unjustly. It would be worse not to obey "the God" than to die. The morality of Socrates was very closely connected with religion. Law and right, he taught, are identical; but law is ultimately of God. And there are "unwritten laws," he says to Hippias. And he does not mean merely the simpler laws of all society that no one ever had need to write down. But as for these laws, Could men have made them? he asks. Could they have come together for that purpose? Or, if they did, could they ever agree? It is his o-

pinion that the gods made these laws. — Then he proceeds to show that no amount of transgression of the laws, or neglect of them can prove that the laws do not exist. Besides, all transgression brings with it its suited penalty — a fact which he refers to the device of the gods, i.e., which seems to require such an explanation. The discourse is concluded by Socrates saying, "And so, Hippias, we conclude that with the gods law and right are identical." Turning the matter about it seems to mean, Right is law, and law is from the gods, therefore obligation is of divine source.

This brings us naturally to the notion of Socrates concerning his "Daemon". In the <u>Apology</u> he desires among other things to explain why he has kept aloof from politics. "Now the cause of this (says he) is none other than that which you have

frequently heard me mention, namely, that 'something divine and superhuman' to which Meletus in his address scoffingly alluded; for this is the sober truth, ye judges, that from my boyhood I have on all important occasions been wont to hear a voice which, whenever it speaks in reference to what I am about to do, always warns me to refrain, but never urges me to perform. This voice it is, and nothing else, which forbade me to meddle with public affairs" &c. To Socrates there was the "something divine" within, and a conflict with the world without was inevitable. That inner voice was not something vague, to be expressed with fair success by τὸ δαιμόνιον, but the voice came from the δαίμων - personal. It is possible, however, that Socrates did not really mean to assert that a divine spirit did speak to him immediately. Yet it is clear that he did consider that

voice a divine warning. And in this notion of the δαιμόνιον he approached very near to the Christian idea of the conscience. Just why he should not have come into even clearer light is, perhaps, something which we cannot explain. As to what the "Daemon" was and was understood by Socrates to be, it seems clear that it was an experience which seemed to Socrates like the voice of a "familiar spirit," which dissuaded him from certain courses of action, though it did not prompt him to others. "As it rested on no grounds of human argumentation, and did not pretend to explain itself, [it] fell to be classed with what we call mysterious instincts and presentiments, and which, as a pious man, Socrates, and in my opinion wisely, attributed to the Source of all original vital power and spiritual energy, viz. God" (Blackie, Four Phases of Morals, p. 125 fol.). The same writer says further: "In accordance with this healthy

human instinct. Socrates taught that on great and critical occasions he was often directed by a mysterious voice, or intimation from the τὸ δαιμόνιον. The only thing about the matter which ought to require explanation is the method in which this divine power acted. Its method of action was negative, never positive, and warning on each occasion from what was not to be done, never inciting to what should be done. The reason of this, we think, is not far to seek. Socrates was both personally, and in virtue of the people to whom he belonged, a reasoner; logic was his lamp through life, and by this clear light he was habitually guided in all common cases. But there are dark and doubtful moments in the brightest lives, when even the wisest and the most conscientious can find no sure direction in the pros and cons that suffice for general guidance; in such cases one is thrown back on those radical

and fundamental instincts of character which underlie all reasoning and all purpose;" &c. (Four Phases, pp. 126-7).

It is evident that Socrates regarded the voice of the δαιμόνιον as of ultimate authority. And herein is the significance of his ethical system grounded. If in general reason may lead to a knowledge of truth and right, and true enlightenment is virtue, still, wherever and however found, the right is law and law is of God (or the gods).

One must notice that, although Socrates was in the habit of teaching that one's judgment of right and wrong should be cautious and of forethought, he does not make τὸ δαιμόνιον the object of appeal in ordinary cases. And although self-condemnation is taught as the natural inner consequence of wrong-doing, the δαιμόνιον is never spoken of as the accuser. In short, in so far as the δαιμόνιον stands for our

notion of conscience, it is never for the conscience that follows upon sin with accusation. And the place given to the δαιμόνιον is quite exceptional. Not an abiding consciousness in the ethical domain, but a voice warning on occasion is the δαιμόνιον.

Plato appears to have added no new principle to the ethics of Socrates, unless less belongs to Socrates than we judge must be allowed to him in the teachings of the Platonic dialogues. There is every reason, however, to believe that much of the development of the ethical notions of Socrates we must attribute to Plato. In the speculations concerning metaphysics and politics and laws (apart from the simpler ethical principles in the latter two) it seems likely that Plato produced much that Socrates never thought of. As to other Socratic philosophers, there is not much that needs to be

soil. This thought, however, is important. The primary basis of the Socratic ethics was, after all, reason, intellectualism. He gave a place to the δαιμόνιον, but did not sufficiently indicate the truth that all men should expect the same warning voice. The place of conscience was not large enough. When, therefore, Plato has developed the germs of the Socratic philosophy, there was no more to be done in the same direction. The Socratic school came close to the center of ethical philosophy, but could not reach it by the logical path.

After Plato the next great name is, of course, Aristotle. As a moralist Aristotle was not so great as in some other fields. Still he was very great even here, although to be ranked below Plato in this province. His ethical system was teleological or rational in its basis, rather than in-

tutional or utilitarian. His whole anthropology was ethical, and his ethics was thoroughly practical. Perhaps most persons will agree that his ethics really lacked something important, when it lacked the idealism of Socrates and Plato. Ethics was to him purely a practical science, and man had in him understanding (νοῦς), by which he was to be guided. But Aristotle's writings on ethics are unsatisfactory, because, although his tone is more that of the thoughtful preacher than of the mere speculator, he seems to fail to reach a fundamental ethical principle. His practical principles are usually unobjectionable in themselves, but they are not in themselves sufficiently fruitful. If he has a basal principle of ethics it would seem to be this: Virtue is to do good with pleasure in the good — for good's sake. And the good is

not the consequence, but goodness is in the act. But that leads to the question of the source of the goodness. It is in a moral disposition and purpose. But now for a final principle. What should regulate the moral disposition and purpose? Aristotle does not bring us to any other principle than he starts out with. His convictions seem noble, and his <u>formal</u> principle is good; but a <u>material</u> principle, a real basis of ethics he has not. He teaches something concerning self-condemnation; but that is simply the reason's verdict. His ethics practically amounts to a sort of "aristocratism." He leaves no place for the clear light of conscience apart from a refined intellectual training. So we may say, in conclusion, great as Aristotle was, his ethical theories did not lead the world any nearer to grasping the true idea

of the nature and place of conscience.

The inquiry would not be complete without a few words concerning the popular notions of the Greek people (shared also by the Romans, though in the case of the latter with more stress laid on the fact of law in nature &c.) as they touched the phenomena of conscience. While certain philosophers were making ethics too much the affair of the few, the people still had their notions, and these cannot fail to be worthy of study. The theology of the people did not altogether overlook the fact that the impiety of men deserved punishment, as well as that it appeared to receive it. The gods were sometimes pictured as being little concerned in man's conduct. But this is not to be supposed to be the ordinary view. From the great tragic poets we learn how strong and clear was the sense of divine righteousness, bent on punishing wrong. The lessons in Oedipus and Orestes &c. are unmistakable. There was manifestly a popular consciousness of guilt, and the self-accusation

was unmistakable.

Turning now to the Romans, it cannot be doubted that much matter related to our subject offers itself in the writings of Roman philosophers, as Cicero, Seneca, Epictetus, Marcus Aurelius, &c. But space will not allow an extensive discussion.

It may be said that an eclectic stoicism was the state philosophy of Rome. It suited the temper of the people, and the political life of the nation. As for our immediate subject, the philosophy of conscience, we may find as much light from poets and historians as from the philosophers. The poet Lucretius was, indeed, philosopher as well as poet. The interesting thing about him is that he is atheistic for conscience' sake. So dreadful are the crimes committed in the name of religion that he rejects belief in the gods altogether.

This may not show Lucretius a profound thinker, but it is interesting as showing that he regarded his sense of right supreme. Then such hits as this of Juvenal "se judice nemo nocens absolvitur" (V, 2, 3), point clearly enough to the ethical consciousness which we call conscience.

The literary allusions to conscience point clearly to the conclusion that an evil (or condemning) conscience was oftenest in mind.

Stoicism never did allow enough to individuality in ethics, and the despotism of the Roman empire tended still further to repress it. Then the intellectualism and aristocratism of philosophers appeared here, in a new form, quite as prominently as in the school of Aristotle. And, for some reason, as this type of philosophy continued, the tendency was to weaken the sense of guilt in the sinner. Of

course the stoic determinism was the chief cause. The sinner learned to regard himself more as a sufferer and victim than as a guilty person. This determinism could not assist, of course, in the needed advance toward a clear conception of conscience. And as for any such thorough notion of conscience as the New Testament furnishes, no trace of it can be found among Roman writers. When Seneca speaks of that "spiritus sacer intra nos sedens" which gives us "consilia erecta et magnifica", he does not call upon the "spirit" to utter what is duty &c. It is no more than a spirit whose presence inspires men. Stoicism is pantheism and intellectualism, and its virtue is <u>recta ratio</u>. Stoicism has not even the room for a warning and guiding Daemon that the philosophy of Socrates and Plato gave; for it is distinctly pantheistic.

As has been hinted at in what

was said of Philo's well developed use of τὸ συνειδός, the influence of the O.T. on a certain school of philosophers was not slight. A more careful study of Philo and his relation to the O.T. teachings would here be in place, but can hardly be strictly necessary. It may be well to remark simply that Philo never reached a theory of an autonomic conscience, apart from the conscious transgression of positive divine laws.

The sum of all the inquiry concerning pagan conceptions of conscience is about as follows:
(1) Pagan thought never reached a conception of an abiding consciousness of moral relation, whether autonomic or theonomic.
(2) The religious bearing of conscience was never clearly perceived, even by Socrates and his school. Socrates was the nearest approach to

the Christian standpoint, but even he missed his way.

Enough has already been said concerning the N. T. appropriation of the word συνείδησις to a higher and more special ethical use. Leaving then the linguistic inquiry, we have yet to state (though only in a summary manner) what the <u>content</u> of the N. T. teaching concerning conscience is.

(1) Our Lord does not make use of the notion of conscience in its developed form, where a psychological reflection has put its stamp on the word which Paul uses. Paul's συνείδησις is in a measure a philosophical term. But Jesus appeals to the <u>fact</u> of conscience repeatedly – as "the light that is in thee", "the heart," &c.

(2) Paul teaches that the heathen possess the power of judging what is right. They by nature have a law written on their hearts. This

is an ethical faculty which in the heathen may be called autonomic. (See Köhler, Art. "Gewissen", in Herzog-Plitt.)

(3) But the Christian, though with a faculty in itself not differing from the moral faculty of the heathen, has a conscience which is now conditioned and determined according to the law of God, and according to a personal relation to God. The Christian conscience is, therefore, theonomic.

(4) Paul brings out with wonderful clearness the doctrine of the individuality of the conscience. With this doctrine is bound up inseparably the Pauline doctrine of the liberty of conscience, as over against all human domination. Each Christian stands or falls to his own Master. And in matters of casuistic uncertainty every man is to be fully persuaded in his own mind.

(5) From the facts of (3) and (4) — the theonomic character of the Christian conscience, and the individuality of conscience

it follows naturally that lack of faith would be the cause of the confusion as to duty to which Christians seem subject. Faith brings its own corresponding practical knowledge. But when the faith and knowledge are wanting the conscience may err. The judgment of conscience is, therefore, sometimes wrong. Some consciences are "seared," some are "weak." (1 Cor. VIII, 7). This "weak" conscience appears to be what we would ordinarily call "narrow", as would appear from this whole passage, especially v. 12. But even the weak or narrow conscience we are not to cause to stumble, or to wound. Even the erring conscience must not be made subject to any strange authority. The man of weak conscience, seeing one who has knowledge sitting at meat in an idol's temple, may be emboldened to eat (against his own conscience) things offered to idols. This, it is clearly implied, should not be; for thus the brother of weak conscience perishes (1 Cor. VIII, 10, 11).

(6) Paul, Peter, and the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews use the terms "good" or "bad" (evil), or both, as applied to conscience. Concerning these words something needs to be said. The Christian's good conscience evidently is determined by his right relation to God. First of all, then, it is the blood of Christ (Heb. IX, 14) which "cleanses [the] conscience from dead works to serve the living God". In Hebrews X, 22, and 1 Peter III, 21, the entrance upon a state of good conscience is associated with baptism — not, however, as if baptism of itself "saves", but that it is the required and appropriate first step in the outward life to enter upon the new relation of faith. It is the "request of (i.e. for) a good conscience to God" (1 Peter III, 21). — Then we are to note that, according to Paul, this good conscience is to be <u>kept</u>, by right and obedient conduct (Acts XXIV, 16). See also Heb. XIII, 8.

"This Christian 'good' conscience", says Köhler (Art. "Gewissen", Herzog-Plitt) "is not the certainty of reconciliation, but the mirror of the moral condition and relation in its innermost essence. Hence the first thing with which it has to do is the εἰλικρίνεια (sincerity - 2 Cor. 1, 12), and this bears witness to the "pure" conscience (1 Tim. III, 9; 2 Tim. I, 3). Its opposite, the "defiled" conscience (1 Tim. IV, 2; Tit. I, 15), arises from conscious immorality (1 Tim. I, 19). Therefore the "faith unfeigned" falls with the fall of the "good" or "pure" conscience."

(7) As to the judgment of conscience, the following points should be noted:

(a) When Paul speaks of the conscience of the heathen, of being commended by his own conscience, to the consciences of those to whom he writes, and to the consciences of all men, he clearly implies that the human conscience is a universal faculty. Concerning the first principles of morals every

man can know and does know. And this implies that there is a consistency of moral relation for all men - that one is in the same relation to moral law as another. Hence it follows that the conscience, although individual, is in a manner the basis of the judgment even of the conduct of others.

(6) The conscience is taught by Paul to be the ~~natural~~ susceptibility by nature for the sense of religious obligation (Rom. II, 14, 15). It is a sort of God-consciousness, therefore, and is the faculty which gives us a sense of judgment that is from God.

(8) Paul touches upon a number of ethical matters in which he appeals to the conscience. Such are the rights of governors, kings and all in authority; the relation of Gentiles to the law of Moses; certain matters of church order, &c., &c. It is true, indeed, that he does not use the word conscience in

all these cases. Still, they are evidently all cases of conscience, as his treatment of the questions shows. In these cases he clearly regards the universal validity of moral distinctions, while at the same time he never omits to give due regard to the individuality of conscience.

(9) It is not clear that Paul taught that conscience precedes our will and actions and gives us infallible indication of duty. Rather, on the contrary, is it clear that the infallibility of conscience is nowhere taught. The conscience is the moral consciousness, and the knowledge of duty as such is not supposed to come through this faculty immediately, but rather to be made known to the understanding by the various processes of thought, or by intuition, or revelation, or by the teaching of the Spirit, or by the writing of the law on the

heart, as God's endowment in the nature of man — all this, however, resulting in moral consciousness by virtue of a faculty of moral discrimination (conscience). Paul does not teach, therefore, that conscience tells a man what he ought to do, but that it is the faculty by which a man does make moral distinctions, in so far as he makes them at all. And in some measure all men do make such distinctions. Conscience, therefore, does precede, and accompany, and follow an act, but not as if in each case it was a separate faculty operating without reference to the processes of reason or understanding.

(10) Though, according to Paul, conscience is the basis of religious susceptibility — being itself primarily a God-consciousness, there is, nevertheless, no evidence, as Köhler shows (Art. "Gewissen", Herzog-Plitt), that he considered it competent to give of itself a correct knowledge

of God, nor that from him the word-like "faith", "love", "spirit"- passed into early Christian current speech. The word, indeed, was rarely used in the oldest Christian literature.

We may now turn to the inquiry concerning the theory of conscience in Christian thought since N. T. times. The non-Christian systems of the early part of the Christian era had nothing to do with any further development of the conception of conscience beyond what had been given by the earlier philosophers. The subsequent history of the theory of conscience is wholly within the limits of Christendom, and under the conditioning influence of Christian thought.

For the early Christian and middle ages the present writer has but one satisfactory authority at hand, Kähler's Article "Gewissen" in Herzog-

Plitt's Encyklopädie, which he is obliged to follow closely in the portion of the paper that treats of those periods.

Chrysostom gave the first clear expression to the idea of a "commanding, authoritative" conscience. But Chrysostom's notion of conscience seems to be in no small measure derived from the heathen usage, especially that of Phils. Then the Christian Cicero had a rather extravagant notion of the power of conscience, regarding it as the source of all ethical knowledge, and, along with κτίσις (creation) the second original, immediate source of θεογνωσία (knowledge of God). This is the first clear expression of the idea of a "preceding" or "commanding" conscience. Augustine and Pelagius, however, both repeat the popular idea of moral consciousness, as simply a judging faculty.

The scholastics of the middle ages emphasized the connection between 'consciousness' and 'conscience'

in accordance with their subjective ethics. Alexander Hales, in the height of the scholastic age, took up the subject of conscience, and treated the material that had been handed down in a rather excellent manner. Then Aquinas took up the subject, and gave it its finished form for scholasticism, in his Summa Theol. The most peculiar thing about this first scientific treatment of the subject was the introduction of the idea of the συντήρησις (literally, "close watching"), "the inner guard keeping watch and ward over the hidden sources of the will;" which was identified with the conscience, and at the same time distinguished from it. The word came from Jerome; but the schoolmen, under the influence of Aristotelian psychology, found in it the practical intellect; i.e., what they called the potentia or habitus of the moral principle. Conscientia, on the other hand, denoted the ap-

plication of this synteresis to the individual. It is, therefore, according to Thomas Aquinas, only an actus. To this notion was naturally added the notion of fallibility. How to apply principles was a serious question, and it led to all sorts of hair-splitting judgments, especially by writers of books on casuistry. The Jesuits, of course, have carried this to the farthest extreme; but they ignore the synteresis, and call conscientia a prejudgment, or, rather, practically regard it as a prejudgment, which probabilism removes. Jesuitism has thoroughly done away with any notion of authority in the individual conscience.

In connection with this tendency a different one is found in mediaeval mysticism. Gerson and other mystics looked upon the synteresis as the longing and power of the soul to come into immediate contact with

God.

The great attention accorded to conscience in the middle ages, not only by "the school," but also in churchly practice – an attention relatively much greater than that given to the subject in the N. T. – belongs essentially among the presuppositions that in the Reformation the doctrine of conscience should play an important part. One only needs to glance hastily over the official documents of the Reformation to know that anxiety and comfort, slavery and freedom of consciences belonged to the essential means of proof and most important controversial titles of its teaching. But its doctrine strang from practical life. Accordingly it is not the scholastic notion which one meets in the utterances of the reformers. At times it is the immediate and independent consciousness of duty; at times it is the experience of of a sense of misery, or the accusation

of conscience which it is not possible to suppress. And to the conscience Luther appealed for its approval or confirmation of the doctrine of justification by faith. Luther said, the conscience is a "witness that touches those matters where one has to do with God", "a thing that only judges concerning works." Calvin's statements on the subject may be comprehended in substance in these words, that the conscience is "sensus divini judicii et imperii." He, like Luther, ascribes to conscience an important relation to the doctrine of justification by faith, and to the doctrine of Christian liberty. Since this time the Romish casuistry has carried the doctrine of a fallible, multiform conscience further than before, while Protestantism, (the humanistic as well as the religious tendency in it), has continued to announce the belief in the vocation to the religio-ethical individual consciousness. So the living notion has become the common heritage

of the modern peoples, but no new feature has been added to the content of the idea in these more recent generations.

The Reformation was followed up by a Protestant casuistry, which, while indulging too much in old minute subdivisions, did not make ecclesiastical law its starting-point and aim, but sought for peace of conscience, the "good, pure conscience" of the N.T. Then the pietists showed a similar tendency. The theologians of later times had various theories, which we may at this time pass by, until we come to the modern philosophers, whose theories we shall be able to set forth only in the merest outline.

In England Hobbes introduced most boldly a thoroughly selfish theory of morals. The importance of conscience he very much minified, defining it as "the opinion of evidence" ("On Human Nature," ch. VI, §8). But later the views

of a different school of thought became prevalent, and the doctrine of "innate ideas" was applied to the conscience. But Hutcheson put instead of "innate ideas" (as including conscience) the expression "moral sense". But Locke comes, and defines conscience as "our own opinion or judgment of the moral rectitude or pravity of our own actions" (Essay, Book I, Ch III, §8). So some of the empirical philosophers, following Locke, denied it any such place as the intuitionists gave it. Empiricism was the natural parent of utilitarianism, of which more will be said later. Butler, in his famous sermons on Human Nature, and in his Dissertation on the Nature of Virtue, assigns to conscience the loftiest place — a "supremacy." Conscience, he says, is the "moral approving and disapproving faculty"; the moral faculty is a "principle of reflection, or conscience". "That principle by which

we survey, and either approve or disapprove our own heart, temper, and actions, is not only to be considered as what is in its turn to have some influence; which may be said of every passion, of the lowest appetites; but likewise as being superior; as from its very nature claiming superiority over all others; insomuch that you cannot form a notion of this faculty, Conscience, without taking in judgment, direction, superintendency. This is a constituent part of the idea; that is of the faculty itself; and to preside and govern, from the very economy and constitution of man, belongs to it. Had it strength as it has right; had it power as it has manifest authority, it would absolutely govern the world." (Sermon 4). Bishop Butler calls conscience a faculty of human nature. Perhaps, however, he did not mean by faculty just what some have supposed. Whewell ob-

jects to the phrase faculty (as if a distinct faculty). He calls it only an exercise of the reason. Possibly, however, both mean the same thing. For Butler seems himself to teach that conscience is a function of the practical Reason. The question arises, however, what he meant by "practical". In the Analogy (Pt. II, ch. VIII) he says "moral precepts are precepts the reason of which we see." And while Butler speaks so clearly of the supremacy of conscience, he nevertheless teaches that "Reasonable Self-love and Conscience are the <u>two</u> chief or superior principles in the nature of man" (italics mine), and that we are under a "manifest obligation" to obey each. The reconciliation is probably to be found in the reference of each to the constitution and order of human nature, which determines the validity of each in its place.

Kant's is the next great name in

moral philosophy. His utterances concerning conscience, however, are so scattered that it is difficult to obtain a clear conception of his notion of it. It is certain, however, that he insisted with the utmost earnestness and energy that duty is the sole principle of conduct. And he appealed to the inner court of judgment, and urged the recognition of its incomparable worth and dignity. To him duty was a categorical imperative. "Two things", says Kant, "fill the spirit with ever new and increasing wonder and awe, the oftener and more steadily one's thought is occupied with them: the starry heaven above me, and the moral law within me." Kant regarded conscience as that which determines moral principles, (though it does not do this in the abstract). He held that conscience is infallible. "An erring conscience is a chimera."

If Kant did such service in calling attention to the obligation of con-

science, he seems to have overlooked the objective character of moral law — at least he did not clear up the difficulty of obligation to a merely subjective law. (See Janet, "Theory of Morals," pp. 261, 262). Fichte saw the difficulty, and tried to solve it boldly. With him conscience is the "immediate consciousness of the definite duty." According to him, also, as well as according to Kant, the erring conscience does not exist. Still one must use his best endeavor to ascertain his duty, and the true moral sphere is that everyone should try to fulfill his own personal destiny. "The formal law of morals," he said, "is this: Always act in conformity with your convictions of duty (in other words, always obey your conscience). This rule includes two others: First, try to understand clearly what is your duty in every matter; then, when you are convinced what your duty is, do it, for the sole reason that you

are sure that it is your duty" (System der Sittenlehre, quoted by Janet). It is evident that it is only on the subjective side that, according to Fichte, conscience is infallible.

There are seen in Kant and Fichte the elements of the theory of the judgment of conscience as purely formal. That is, their theory led to the latter, which in Herbart appeared as little more than a judgment of taste; as some one has expressed it, "the innate necessity of having an ideal, and of recognizing it as judge over one's self."

The theories of conscience as held by Kant, Fichte, Butler, &c. are all forms of the intuitional theory of conscience. A variety of theories of an opposite nature to the above may be summed up (as by Prof. Calderwood, Handbook) by the expression the "development theory." He also calls them all "utilitarian." Still, it evident

that under these terms are comprehended a great variety of notions and theories. Some do honor to conscience, some treat it with contempt. "Hartley, alone of all the moralists of this (the associational) school recognizes conscience as a real and important element in our nature, and maintains that it is possible to love virtue for itself as a form of happiness, without any thought of ulterior consequences" (Lecky, Eur. Morals, vol. I, p. 29). Schopenhauer speaks with contempt for the (popular) conscience, and computes its elements thus — "one fifth, fear of men; one fifth, superstition; one fifth prejudice; one fifth, vanity; one fifth, custom" (quoted by Calderwood, p. 140-1).

The principal names to be mentioned in connection with the utilitarian theory of morals are Bentham, Bain, J. S. Mill, and Herbert Spencer. But the first three are to be ranked as utilitarians pure and simple,

making utility the only ground of obligation, and therefore making conscience, so far as it has any value, only a subjective feeling corresponding to our judgment. Spencer, however, lays stress on the theory that conscience is the result of education, possessing, accordingly, only a relative and provisional validity. His ethics is evolutional throughout.

Bentham makes Pleasure and Pain the sovereign principles of human action. But pleasure and pain do not seem to touch the sense of obligation, unless simply that we are under obligations to our nature, (which Bentham supposes to have no higher claim than that of pleasure). Bentham, however, made the greatest happiness of the greatest number the end of governments; but he cannot find place for anything better than a refined selfishness in individual morals. Person-

ally, however, he was a man of self-denying benevolence and public spirit.

Bain, and, before him, Hartley and J.S. Mill, did something to relieve the bluntness and crudeness of Benthams system. Bentham, worthy as he was as an individual, set forth a system of ethics very low in its principles. As to conscience he has little to say; but in one place he informs us that "conscience is a thing of fictitious existence, ~~supposed to~~ occupy a seat in the mind;" and in another he ranks "love of duty" (which he describes as an "impossible motive, in so far as duty is synonymous with obligation") as a variety of the "love of power" (quoted by Lecky, p. 29 vol. I). Hartley, J.S. Mill and Bain, however, did set the system forth in a somewhat more favorable light. Bain, in his work on the Emotions and the Will, says: "I have given it as my deliberate opinion that authority or punishment is the commencement of that

state of mind recognized under the various names Conscience, the Moral Sense, the Sentiment of Obligation." Then he proceeds to show that the majority protects itself by rules, to which the refractory members must submit. There results what he calls "an ideal avoidance" of penalty, an awe of penalty even in those who have no special thought of transgressing. "The sense of obligation [tho' mixed with various ingredients] has no other universal property except the ideal and actual avoidance of conduct prohibited by penalties." Then the education proceeds. The punished approve of the punishment, and go over to the majority, and the ultimate end is the perfected man, where conscience, "which was at first derived or implanted, is now independent or self-sustaining." (Emotions and Will, pp. 481-483 -- 2d ed.).

Here, of course, is development,

but it is development according to the strictest principles of the utilitarian philosophy. The thorough-going development theory is that of the evolutionists, represented best by Mr. Herbert Spencer. His theory is "evolution with hedonism"; to use Dr. Martineau's phrase (Types of Ethical Theory). It is, as he himself admits, a type of utilitarianism. Still, he has made certain strictures on the theory as propounded by J. S. Mill and Mr. Bain. But he is for more ambitious in his theory. He tells us, "I conceive it to be the business of moral science to deduce from the laws of life and the conditions of existence what kinds of action necessarily tend to produce happiness and what kinds to produce unhappiness. Having done this, its deductions are to be recognized as laws of conduct" (Data of Ethics, 57).

Spencer says, "Morality has to do with conduct," and conduct he defines as acts adjusted to ends, or else

the adjustment of acts to ends." – "Always acts are called good or bad as they are well or ill adjusted to ends." He shows that some adjustments called good are not regarded as ethical. But from such "we pass by degrees to the most complex adjustments" which are moral (See McCosh, H. S.'s Philosophy, p. 42). For Spencer happiness is the highest end, the end of morals.

It is by evolution that the notions of obligation, duty, conscience &c. are evolved, by the means of pleasure & pain, association of ideas, custom, education, all associated with biological changes and development. "The intuitions of a moral faculty" says he, "are the slowly-organized results of experience received by the race". And he adds, "I believe that the experiences of utility organized and consolidated through all past generations of the human race have

been producing corresponding nervous modifications which, by continued transmission and accumulation, have become in us certain faculties of moral intuition". (Quoted by McCosh, H. S.'s Philos., p. 62).

If Spencer's theory is the newest, it would not be correct to infer that it represents the current theory of the majority of the best thinkers of the day. There has been a decided rejection of all extreme evolutional ethics by the most of the philosophers and thinkers of the period. Ellitorianism in the form of Bain's or Mill's theory is also largely rejected. At the same time the extreme views of certain intuitionists are not looked upon with as much favor as at times in the past. It is generally emphasized that man is capable of moral judgments, by means of a power of

or connected with the reason, which we call conscience. But that power is believed to be original, in the same sense as reason and other natural powers are original, but not infallible, or incapable of education.

A considerable number of individual questions have been slighted in this sketch.

The important question of the training of conscience, which is closely bound up with the question of the fallibility or infallibility of conscience, is largely a question of definition. Is the judgment of conscience formal and abstract, or is it inseparable from concrete cases? If the former, it only asserts principles of duty. Otherwise the application of principles, (this being a matter of rational judgment), depends upon a moral judgment which is more than formal. But no one denies the possi-

bility of moral training and improvement. But take conscience as more than an abstract discrimination, but not as including any rational processes of balancing utilitarian questions, only, however, as the power of making moral judgments, and it would seem that its education was certainly possible.

The relation of conscience to the intellect — to the reason — is a question of interest. Is conscience a separate faculty, or only a function of the reason. Here again accurate definition is important. Is not conscience the moral consciousness, and is not this an essential element of rationality?

The individuality of conscience in its relations to external authority, to the execution of human law, to the so-called "public conscience" &c. has attracted much attention. It seems to

be the general consensus of thinkers that individuality and liberty of conscience furnishes no ground for the repudiation of law. It is not license. Conscience implies an objective law, which should win approval by our subjective consciousness, but which does not derive authority from it.

The many other questions which belong to a full critical or constructive treatise must now be omitted here.

Chief Authorities consulted:

Köhler - Das Gewissen (Bon. 1878), and his Art. Gewissen in Herzog-Plitt's Encykl.

Cremer - Wörterbuch.

Maurice - The Conscience.

Lecky - Hist. of European Morals

J. Cook - Conscience.

Besides these a number of works on ethics by Luthardt, Martineau, Blackie, Bowne, Janet, Calderwood, C. M. Williams, M'Cosh, &c., &c.

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